Launching of: SARAH THEODOSIA & THE HALL FAMILY

Distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen.

The question needs to be asked: Why bother with a publication about the Hall family? Sarah Theodosia Hall, whose genteel and charming countenance shines out from the cover of this little book has been dead for just over 136 years. Henry Edward, her husband and lifelong partner, has been gone for almost as long.

Apart from the name 'Hall's Head' and this modest little cottage -- modest indeed when compared with the magnificent new structures surrounding it -- practically nothing remains to remind us that these early pioneers ever existed.

And yet this publication is important -- important enough for Margaret Wilson to expend much time, energy and money in producing it for the benefit of all West Australians. She did not do it as a mere extension of a sort of ancestor worship, for she catalogues their failings with honesty and candour.
She wrote this book because people need to be reminded -- fairly often, it seems -- that nearly everything we have has been achieved over time by those who came before us; that the progress we see about us; the standard of living we enjoy -- so much of it consists of the steady building on foundations laid by others in earlier times.

You will read how Sarah Theodosia and Henry Edward Hall failed with their Swan River venture. Margaret Wilson tells us that when they died there remained 200 acres of land about here and on which this cottage rests, and a small debt to the government.

And consider what they left in order to come to what must have seemed a God forsaken place. There are pictures of Shackerstone in the book, but, good as they are, even they do not reflect the true beauty and tranquility of the place. I have been there and I know.

But they brought with them in 1830 boats, stores, ploughs, harness -- implements and other items of all descriptions -- and worth thousands of pounds. They were very well off for their day -- millionaires, if you like, of their own times. They invested some 30,000 pounds in the colony during their lifetimes.

And they also brought with them boundless energy and enthusiasm, and a young family who were in turn to become hard working and enterprising colonists. William Shakespeare Hall, the second eldest son, became a pioneer in the North West, and so important was he in that part of the then colony that the museum at the old port of Cossack near Roebourne, has been named the Shakespeare Hall Museum of Social History, in his honour.

Again, though the family suffered great hardship in the early years, and both parents and children were obliged to accept a multitude of disappointments throughout their lives, they still managed to work and to plan and to hope -- they kept on living their lives to the full. Their zest for life and their enthusiastic belief in the future of Western Australia, should serve as a reminder to us all that life is in large measure what you make of it -- no matter what the circumstances might be.

Sarah Theodosia Hall was a very modern lady for her time; Henry Edward a most enterprising and sensible individual. It is a pity that they failed. Government indecision; bureaucratic bullying; the greed and opportunism of others and the almost insurmountable problems involved in starting a European settlement in a remote and vastly different environment to Old England broke them. They also suffered from what we could call plain bad luck.

Look at Sarah Theodosia's portrait and those of Henry Edward and the other members of the family. We were not the first white people here. We were not the first to have enormous problems in society or in our daily lives. We can learn from seeing how they coped. The story told through the pages of this booklet is in many respects a timeless one. The lessons it can teach will be as relevant in another hundred years as they were 150 years ago and are today.

The Halls wanted very much to find success and satisfaction. They craved material reward like everybody else; but they were at all times mindful of the prior inhabitants of the land they occupied, and tried in every way they could, to make the lot of the Aboriginal population better than it currently was. Henry Edward made the effort to learn the rudiments of the Murray Aboriginal language; he got the native people to teach him about this strange, new environment, and he spoke up for the black people, and helped them in many other practical ways, whenever he could.

There is indeed much for us to learn in this little book. It will, I am sure, prove to be an asset to Halls' Cottage, the Mandurah Historical Society, and the district as a whole. I commend it to you and congratulate Margaret most heartily.

Ronald Richards, 20th April, 1994